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# Bangalore Mirror ON SATURDAY

TEMP Max 30 | Min 16 | Humidity 20% Partly sunny Sensex 82,626 | Nifty 25,471 | Gold 1,54,515 | Silver 2,46,003 | Dollar 90.63 | Euro 107.52 | GBP 123.40

## CATCH IT EARLY

Kidwai hospital flags 590 new childhood cancer cases in 2025, calls for early detection and awareness

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## UPSETS & EUPHORIA

Zimbabwe shock Australia for 23-run win; dazzling partnership helps UAE defeat Canada; USA demolish Netherland

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**Criminals now combining sextortion with AI-based image manipulation to blackmail victims, say experts as official data shows sextortion cases have risen from 49 in 2024 to 100 in 2025, while deep fake or deep nude cases doubled from 20 to 40**

# DANGEROUS LIAISONS

## Screenshots and chats serve as key evidence, advises cybercrime expert

Sanjana CS
c-sanjana.s@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

The plight of a 24-year-old Bengalurean adds to the rising cases involving sextortion, deepfake manipulation or deep nude image morphing that police say are steadily climbing year after year across the state. Official data shows sextortion cases have risen from 49 in 2024 to 100 in 2025, while deep fake or deep nude cases doubled from 20 to 40. Cyber experts warn that criminals are now combining sextortion with AI-based image manipulation to blackmail victims and advise the public to beware of strangers and romance scams this Valentine's Day.

The woman victim filed a complaint with the East CEN cybercrime police station after a man allegedly harassed her online, demanded intimate photographs, and later created a fake social media profile using her name to circulate morphed images.

According to the complaint filed on February 11, the accused, identified as Ashwin, first contacted the woman through Snapchat in April 2024 and gradually gained her acquaintance. In October 2025, he allegedly began calling

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> **"Many people turn to dating apps seeking genuine connections, but scammers are taking advantage of this trust. Using AI-generated faces and deepfake technology, they create convincing identities and even do realistic video calls**
>
> —Chetan Anand, Cybercrime Intervention Officer

# But, a rose is a rose

Nearly 3 crore red roses shipped from city to markets across India and abroad over past 2 weeks

Sridhar.Vivan
@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @sridharVMIRROR

Bengaluru may be known as India's tech capital, but this Valentine's season it is also reaffirming its status as a rose export hub. In the run up to Valentine's Day, nearly three crore red roses have been shipped from the city to markets across India and abroad over the past two weeks, turning it into one of the biggest seasonal booms for the city's floriculture sector.

With February 14 falling on a weekend this year, demand has spiked sharply, pushing up prices and lifting the mood of growers and traders alike. Wholesale prices of a single red rose, which hovered between ₹15 and ₹20 last year, have now climbed to ₹25 to ₹30 per stem. Farmers are currently getting ₹15 to ₹20 per flower, making this one of the most rewarding seasons in recent years.

From polyhouses in Chikkaballapur, Doddaballapur, Devanahalli and Ramanagara, premium Dutch varieties and other roses are being harvested in large numbers. While exports to countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Dubai have touched around 30 lakh stems till February 10, this year the domestic market has outpaced overseas demand. Cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad,

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## THINGS TO DO

### 01 Soulful serenade

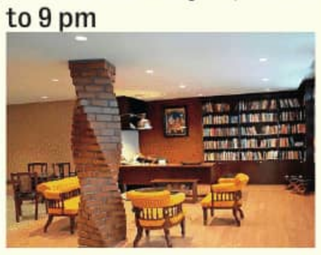
Faheem Abdullah, the Kashmiri singer-songwriter behind deeply resonant tracks like Saiyaara, Ishq, Ehsaas, and Sajde, whose music has quietly become the soundtrack to longing, love, and introspection for a new generation, is set to perform in a Valentine's Day concert. **Where: Bhartiya Mall of Bengaluru; When: February 14, 7.30 pm**

### 02 Not your average V-Day

At Loco Lane, love isn't just complicated, it's officially cancelled. No roses. No awkward candlelight dinners. Just high-energy games, unapologetic fun, and large groups celebrating friendship, freedom, and chaos—done the luxury way. **Where: Loco Lane, Ashok Nagar; When: February 14, 5 pm**

### 03 Gal squad chronicles

Atta Galatta is bringing a Galentine's celebration designed exclusively for women, moving beyond the clichés to celebrate stories, secrets, and sisterhood through a daylong lineup of curated fun. **Where: Atta Galatta, Indiranagar; When: February 14, 10 am to 9 pm**



### 04 Boundless music

Vocalist and songwriter Violetta Parisini, known for creating music that speaks across language through vulnerability, lyricism, and depth, will be performing live with her band. **Where: Windmills Craftworks, Whitefield; When: February 14, 9.30 pm**

### 05 Step toward wellness

The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce is organising the 2nd edition of its walkathon, inviting all to put their best foot forward for a morning of health, heart, and high-level networking. **Where: Cubbon Park; When: February 14, 8 am**

# Cancer cases continue to climb in children

## Data shows growing paediatric cancer challenge; experts highlight while number of cases being reported remains significant, awareness and access to care have improved over years

Iffath Fathima
iffath.fathima
@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Ahead of International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD), observed every year on February 15, the Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology (KMIO) has highlighted the continuing burden of childhood cancer, registering around 590 new cases in 2025 alone at its Department of Paediatric Oncology.

According to KMIO's 2024 data, a total of 13,228 cancer cases were recorded at the institute, of which 588 cases (4.4 per cent) were in the 0–19 years age group. Among children and adolescents, 348 were boys (5.6 per cent of total male cases) and 240 were girls (3.4 per cent of total female cases). The overall cases included 6,205 males and 7,023 females. In 2025, the Department of Paediatric Oncology not only registered nearly 590 new childhood cancer cases but also handled 12,612 outpatient visits, reflecting the growing demand for specialised paediatric cancer care. The department recorded 25 deaths during the year.

### Increased awareness

Dr Arun Kumar AR, professor and Head of the Department of Paediatric Oncology at KMIO, said that while the number of cases being reported remains significant, awareness and access to care have improved over the years.

"Earlier, there was very little awareness about the symptoms and signs of childhood cancer among the public. Even many medical professionals were not adequately sensitised. Now, the majority are aware, and children are being referred earlier," he said. He added that the number of personnel trained in paediatric oncology has increased considerably, with many specialists now serving in hospitals closer to patients' homes. "It is not just KMIO anymore. Several well-established hospitals are also diagnosing and treating childhood cancers. That is a positive development," Dr Kumar noted.

However, he stressed that early detection remains the need of the hour. "Cases are still being reported in large numbers. Timely diagnosis can significantly improve survival outcomes," he said.

### Leukaemia cases recorded most

Of the 590 new cases registered in 2025, nearly 200 were cases of leukaemia, making it the most common childhood cancer treated at the institute. This was followed by brain tumours, lymphoma, solid tumours, soft tissue and bone cancers, and bone tumours, in that order.

According to the Globocan 2022 report, leukaemia is the most common childhood cancer, accounting for around 40 per cent of cases in boys and 34 per cent in girls, followed by brain and nervous system tumours. Although survival rates exceed 80 per cent in developed countries, children in low- and middle-income countries face challenges such as delayed diagnosis, difficulty in accessing specialised care, treatment-related complications, treatment abandonment, and relapse. Early detection and timely referral remain critical to improving outcomes.

### Early detection critical

Dr Naveen T, Director KMIO, said, "Parents and caregivers are advised to seek medical attention if a child develops warning signs such as an unusual lump or swelling, persistent fever, unexplained paleness, easy bruising or bleeding, frequent headaches with vomiting, prolonged fatigue, significant weight loss, vision changes (white reflex), persistent lymph node enlargement, or unexplained night sweats."

KMIO's overall data for 2024 shows a slightly higher number of female cancer cases (7,023) compared to males (6,205), with 240 paediatric female and 348 paediatric male cases. Dr Arun Kumar highlighted this as a notable shift in gender trends. While earlier girl children were often brought late for treatment due to social factors, that gap is narrowing. "There was a time when girl children did not receive equal attention. Families would sometimes neglect symptoms due to social issues and not want to continue treatment despite knowing the cause. Similarly when male child was brought they would seek full treatment. Now, there is greater gender equality, and people understand that the life of a girl child is equally important. Prompt treatment is happening for both boys and girls," he said.

# Coma patient's family pleads for discharge

Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Exhausted after three years of relentless commuting between Bengaluru and Ramanagara, the parents of Ranjith Raj staged a protest outside the Director's Office of the Institute of Nephro Urology. Having spent significant money, time, and hope while their son remained in a coma for three years and three months, they gathered in frustration to plead for his discharge from the hospital. "No one at the Institute of Nephro Urology is bothered about my son who has been in a coma for the last three years and three months. No treatment is provided to him till date. We are exhausted of funds and patience. All these years, we have been commuting between Bengaluru and Ramanagara on a daily basis to visit our son expecting him to become normal but in vain. I want to take my ailing son to my home," said Violet, Ranjith Raj's mother.

Bangalore Mirror published a story 'Hospital visit turns long nightmare' on May 15, 2024, narrating how the

BangaloreMirror
Hospital visit turns long nightmare

**BM published 'Hospital visit turns long nightmare' on May 15, 2024, narrating how visit to hospital ended with patient in coma**

**Daily commute from Ramanagara to Bengaluru has become increasingly difficult, say patient's parents who staged protest, urging for his release so care could be provided back home**

family of Ranjith Raj from Ramanagara, accompanied him to the Institute of Nephro Urology (INU) situated at Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru on October 17, 2022, expecting better treatment for his urological problem. The story also narrated how Ranjith's aged parents and wife, when he was taken into the operation theatre, expected him to return to the ward within three to four hours. As the hours passed, their anxiety grew and it was only after repeatedly questioning hospital staff that they were finally allowed to see him, at midnight. His parents and wife attempted to speak with him, but he remained unresponsive as he lay in a coma.

On Friday morning, a crowd of people, including patients, gathered outside the Director's Office of the Institute of Nephro Urology, urging the discharge of Ranjith Raj so his family could care for him at their home in Ramanagara. Narrating his ordeal, Prithvi Raj, father of Ranjith Raj, explained that the family has been making repeated requests to the doctors for Ranjith's discharge, stressing that daily travel from Ramanagara to Bengaluru has become an overwhelming burden. "The Director told us that he could not take a call on discharging my son as there is a case pending with Karnataka

Medical Council and the hearing of the case is scheduled on Saturday. The Director has demanded us to give our consent in writing," he said. He added that the Director allegedly provided the family with the assurance that he would try his best to get the approval from Karnataka Medical Council for Ranjith's discharge to be made possible.

Dr Shivalingaiah, Director of Institute of Nephro Urology was not available for comment.

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**Good show, brother:** Proud brother Ishaan Khatter penned an appreciation post for Shahid Kapoor on social media after witnessing his latest outing 'O'Romeo'.

IN HIGH COURT

## Relief to mother-in-law in cruelty case

The Karnataka High Court has quashed criminal proceedings initiated against a 58-year-old mother-in-law in a case registered under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, observing that allegations against relatives must be supported by specific material.

Section 498A deals with cruelty by a husband or his relatives towards a married woman and carries a punishment of up to three years' imprisonment and a fine. The petitioner approached the High Court seeking to set aside proceedings against her, arguing that the accusations made by her daughter-in-law were vague and general in nature.

Allowing the petition, Justice MG Uma stressed that judicial authorities must remain vigilant against misuse of the provision. The judge observed that prosecution should not proceed in the absence of prima facie material and cautioned against roping in relatives based solely on broad allegations arising from matrimonial discord.

The order further noted that family members not directly involved in the day-to-day marital relationship require careful scrutiny before being implicated.

The case stemmed from a complaint alleging cruelty and harassment by the husband and his mother. The bench found inconsistencies between allegations in maintenance proceedings and the criminal complaint, concluding that the dispute primarily concerned marital discord. Finding insufficient material, the proceedings against the mother-in-law were set aside.

–BMB

CRIME FILES

# Seven killed in Hoskote multi-vehicle horror crash

Seven people, including a 26-year-old motorcyclist and six young passengers travelling in an SUV, were killed in a horrific multi-vehicle crash near Hoskote on Bengaluru's outskirts in the early hours of Friday. The accident allegedly occurred after the speeding vehicle rammed into multiple vehicles in quick succession along the highway.

Police said the crash took place around 3.30 am near M Satyavara village on the Hoskote–Doddaballapur National Highway, close to Kambalipura. The SUV, identified as an XUV700, was heading from Hoskote towards Devanahalli with six occupants on board.

The deceased were identified as Gagan (26), a private firm employee, and six students of RV College of Engineering, Yelahanka — Ashwin, Arhan, Ayaan (18), Ethan George, Farhan, and Bharath (18).

A view of a truck overturned in a road accident which killed seven people, on Hoskote–Dabaspet National Highway, in Bengaluru on Friday

Preliminary investigations revealed that the SUV, allegedly at high speed, first rammed a motorcycle from behind, killing Gagan instantly as he was returning home after a night shift. The impact caused the driver to lose control, and the vehicle then crashed into the rear of a canter truck. The force snapped the SUV's axle and overturned the truck onto the service road. A third car struck the dislodged axle but its occupants escaped unhurt. Police have registered a case and are probing whether intoxication or overspeeding contributed to the crash.

–BMB

## 'Leave India' order: Centre need not notify each foreign worker

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that the central government is not required to individually notify every foreign worker before issuing a "Leave India" directive, clarifying the scope of immigration enforcement for employment visa holders.

The judgment came on a petition filed by an Australian national who challenged a 2019 notice directing him to leave the country. He contended that the order was issued without personal intimation and sought to have it quashed.

Dismissing the plea, Justice Suraj Govindaraj held that a foreign national's stay in India is conditional and not absolute. The court observed that an employment visa grants permissive entry and does not create a vested right to remain for its entire duration.

The bench noted that the petitioner's visa had been issued based on representations made by his employer, but authorities later found deficiencies in the recruitment process, including lack of genuine local hiring considerations. This, the judgment said, justified issuance of the Leave India notice.

The order stated that the directive was supported by documentary material and processed through the administrative hierarchy. It added that benefits flowing from misrepresentation cannot be retained, regardless of personal culpability. The bench further observed that the petitioner's later visits on business and tourist visas did not invalidate the earlier notice.

–BMB

## Massive recovery drive by north police

Bengaluru City Police North Division returned stolen property worth Rs 1.79 crore from 75 reported cases, and announced the arrest of 83 accused in cases ranging from day and night house breaks, vehicle theft, mobile theft, chain snatchings and robberies. The recovered loot include 1.879 kg of gold ornaments, 4.58 gram of diamond ornaments, 1.783 kg of silver articles alongside 54 two wheelers, 2 three wheelers and 1 four wheeler, about 67 mobile phones, one laptop, TV and water motor each and Rs 3 lakh in cash in areas Hebbal, Sanjaynagar, RT Nagar, JC Nagar, Jalahalli, RMC Yard, Yeshwanthpur, Nandini Layout, Mahalaxmi layout, Subramanayanagar, Rajijinagar, Srirampura and Malleshwaram.

During a press meet Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh encouraged citizens to report crimes at the earliest so the police can promise a swift and compulsive recovery of the stolen valuable. He also spoke about the various upgrades within the police department that will aid in cracking cases expeditiously.

–BMB

## Online order shock: Clothes instead of razor

The Karnataka Upalokayukta officer in the city has filed a cheating complaint after allegedly receiving old clothes instead of a men's razor blade ordered online.

According to the complaint lodged at the Central Cyber Crime Police Station, Justice K.N. Phaneendra placed an order for a razor blade on February 4 through the Good Max website. On February 9, a delivery executive identified as Vijay contacted him, informing that the parcel had arrived and seeking confirmation for delivery.

As the officer was at work, he directed that the package be delivered to his residence. The consignment was handed over the same day by a representative of Shadowfox Surface Logistics, who collected 699 in cash before leaving the premises.

However, upon returning home and opening the parcel, the officer discovered old clothes inside instead of the ordered product. When contacted, the delivery agent reportedly denied responsibility and advised him to approach the seller.

Alleging inaction by both the seller and logistics firm, the officer filed a formal complaint. Police have registered a case of cheating and deficiency of service, and further investigation is underway.

–BMB

## Meat sale ban on Shivarathri

On account of "Maha Shivaratri" falling on Sunday, February 15, the Greater Bengaluru Authority has imposed a complete ban on animal slaughter in slaughterhouses and on the sale of meat in shops within its jurisdiction, the Deputy Director of the Animal Husbandry Department stated. — BMB

## Paws off our pooches

Following a tip-off that street dogs in the city were to be caged, taken away and allegedly poisoned, a whistleblower alerted authorities to verify the claim. It soon emerged that such a move could have led to the animals' deaths. Agencies and rescue teams rushed to Vaidehi Hospital in Whitefield and worked swiftly to prevent the situation from escalating.

Rescuers, volunteers and citizens tracked developments and raised awareness on social media, calling it an inhumane clean-up drive. Volunteers from Bengaluru Movement for the Voiceless, Jahanvi and Satvik, said that following a Supreme Court order, cruelty against dogs had increased. At Vaidehi, crates were reportedly ordered to relocate or poison 20 dogs, but the attempt was stopped.

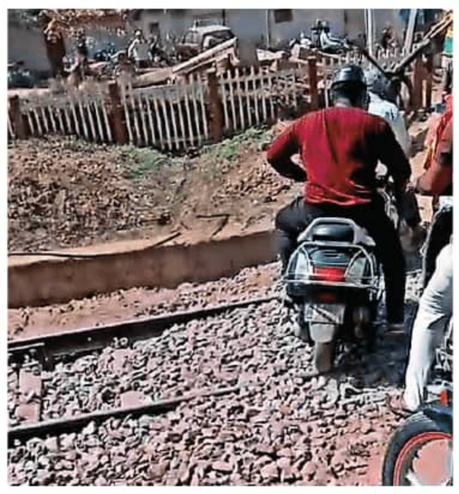
Assistant Director of the Greater Bengaluru Authority, AH Rudresh, said the dogs are safe and will not be relocated until a shelter is built, with land being identified and funds expected soon. The crates were initially said to be for sniffer dogs, later described as winter sheds. Volunteers stressed that relocation cannot occur without a shelter and urged continued vigilance to ensure humane treatment of the city's dogs. — BMB

# Rocky barrier blues bring bumper misery

### Five choke points in Sarvagna Nagar spark fury among daily travellers and neighbourhood associations

Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Above: Crushed stones put along the railway track; Below: Motorists are seen struggling to cross the railway level crossing at Shampura



Railway level crossings are meant to enable vehicles and pedestrians to cross railway tracks safely. Thousands of vehicles pass through the level crossing near KG Halli on a daily basis. Motorists and commuters have been facing considerable problems over the past 15 days while crossing the railway tracks due to loose gravel laid along them. On several occasions, the wheels of goods vehicles and auto-rickshaws have become stuck because of crushed stones placed around the tracks.

"We have been complaining to our MLA, KJ George, about constructing a flyover or an underpass to facilitate the smooth movement of vehicles. There are five railway level crossings in the Sarvagna Nagar Assembly constituency. Two of them

**Residents slam railway authorities as ambulances, autos and goods vehicles struggle through crushed stones and worsening traffic chaos**

— Shampura and Arabic College — are notorious for traffic jams. I want the authorities concerned to fix this problem," said Mohammed Ibrahim, General Secretary of the Nagawara Residential Welfare Association.

Expressing anger and frustration, Mohammed Ibrahim, an auto-rickshaw driver, said railway level crossings are supposed to help vehicles move smoothly, but they have instead become obstacles. "We have to navigate ditches and crushed stones while crossing the tracks. On some occasions, the gates are closed well before motorists can cross the level crossing. I want the elected representatives and railway authorities to take suitable measures to address our problems," he said.

Mohammed Ansar, Vice-President of the Nagawara Residential Welfare Association, said thousands of commuters and two-wheeler riders have been facing significant problems due to delays at railway level crossings in different parts of the Sarvagna Nagar Assembly constituency. "I appeal to the authorities concerned to resolve this issue to ensure the smooth movement of vehicular traffic," he said.

Criticising the authorities and the South Western Railway for failing to take measures to construct either a railway overbridge or an underpass, a resident of Govindapura said the railway authorities must ensure there are no obstacles for vehicles crossing the railway level crossing. "There have been occasions when ambulances got stuck in traffic jams. The demand for the construction of an underpass has been pending for quite a long time," the resident said. However, a South Western Railway engineer was not available for comment.

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### Civic action

**Residency Road**

The footpath near Residency Road was cleared of encroachment after the issue was highlighted in this column.

### Pedestrian peril

**Lingarajapuram**

Encroachment by street vendors has completely blocked the footpath on busy Nehru Road, Lingarajapuram, posing serious safety risks to schoolchildren and elderly pedestrians.

# AI-based image manipulation used to blackmail victims

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

her from multiple mobile numbers and pressured her to send nude photos. When she refused, he reportedly threatened her and resorted to online abuse. Police said the accused later created a fake account on Instagram impersonating the victim and uploaded digitally morphed nude photographs to defame her. The woman discovered the profile after friends alerted her. Based on her complaint, a case has been registered.

While it has become easier to make connections on online platforms in today's digital era, not every conversation can be trusted as genuine. According to official data, related to sextortion cases, in 2023, the city recorded 151 cases, which dropped sharply to 49 in 2024, a decline of nearly 67%. However, the numbers have surged again in 2025, with 100 cases reported.

Meanwhile cases such as deepfake or deep nude show a rise. From just three cases in 2023, the number jumped to 20 in 2024 and later In 2025, the figure has doubled again to 40 cases indicating that technology-driven exploitation is growing much faster than traditional sextortion. According to Chetan Anand, National Cyber Security Scholar and Cybercrime Intervention Officer, every technology has opportunities and risks, and criminals are quick to misuse these developments. He noted that cyber fraud has evolved far beyond conventional tactics, with offenders increasingly using AI-powered tools and easily available image-manipulation software to carry out sophisticated digital crimes. "These technologies are being misused for exploitation," he said. He added that offences such as sextortion, deepfakes and morphed images are no longer isolated threats but are now overlapping, creating a more complex form of cybercrime.

"Many people turn to dating apps seeking genuine connections, but scammers are taking advantage of this trust. Using AI-generated faces and deepfake technology, they create convincing identities and even do realistic video calls. Once conversations turn personal or intimate, the fraudsters secretly record private moments and later use the footage to blackmail victims, threatening to leak the content and extort money from them," he added.

Recently, a 22-year-old man from Ejipura was allegedly duped by cyber fraudsters, who used AI to pose as a woman on a dating app and extorted over Rs 1.5 lakh. The accused lured him into a nude video call, recorded the interaction and threatened to share the clip. Fearing humiliation, the victim initially transferred Rs 60,000 and later Rs 93,000 to bank accounts provided by the accused. When the fraudsters continued to demand more money, the victim approached the police and filed a complaint. Police say the profile and visuals were AI-generated.

Chetan Anand said that sextortion was a crime and innocent victims should not blame themselves. Recalling a recent case, he said a 60-year-old man received a video call from an unknown number where the caller began undressing. Shocked, he disconnected, but the fraudsters started to blackmail him. Despite advice to file an FIR, the man hesitated, fearing humiliation and social stigma. He noted that fraudsters often target men exploiting fears about family and personal reputation, leading to severe underreporting. By the time complaints reach the police station, the content has already spread across platforms, complicating investigations, he said, adding that such tools are easily accessible online, making it harder to control misuse while falling prey.

While Valentine's Day is meant to be about roses and romance, not red flags, cybercrime expert Chetan Anand cautioned users against blindly trusting instant online affection. "People must be wary of sudden declarations of love, overseas job promises, emergency pleas, or efforts to isolate them, as these are common tricks used by scammers to build trust before demanding money. And people never send money, cryptocurrency, gift cards, or personal details to someone they haven't met in person," he said.

Chetan also urged users to avoid accepting friend requests from strangers, avoid sharing personal information too soon and avoid video calls from unknown persons. In sextortion cases, he stressed that screenshots and chats serve as key evidence. Police said victims should secure proof and immediately report suspicious activity through the national cyber crime helpline 1930 or portal or approach the nearest police station.

# Crust me, It's romance

## Across neighbourhood bistros and elevated terraces, companionship takes centre stage amid themed nights and curated indulgence

**Survey insights suggest pairs who invest in shared outings report deeper satisfaction, turning an annual celebration into an opportunity for genuine connection**

Valentine's Day is often associated with roses and candlelight, but for many couples in Bengaluru, love is best celebrated over a shared meal. Across the city's cafés, fine-dining spaces and cosy neighbourhood eateries, February 14, has quietly become one of the busiest evenings of the year. Restaurateurs say reservations spike days in advance, and couples increasingly prefer experiences to expensive gifts.

According to industry estimates, nearly 60 to 70 per cent of urban couples choose dining out as their primary Valentine's Day plan. In a city known for its food culture, that number is hardly surprising. "Food creates memories. Couples may forget the gift they exchanged, but they remember the meal they shared," says Chef Arvind K, who curates special Valentine's menus every year. "We see repeat guests who return to the same table because it has sentimental value."

Interestingly, it is not always about elaborate fine dining. Many couples are opting for comfort food — the kind they can laugh over and enjoy without formality. Pizza, in particular, has emerged as a favourite. Easy to share, customisable and universally loved, it has become a modern symbol of togetherness. "There is something intimate about sharing a pizza," say Meghana and Rohan, a young couple from Indiranagar. "You don't have to be too formal. You just sit close, pick your favourite slice and talk for hours."

Restaurant owners confirm that pizza orders surge on Valentine's Day, both for dining in and delivery. "We notice at least a 30 per cent increase in couple combos on February 14," says a city-based pizzeria manager. "Heart-shaped pizzas and special toppings add to the celebration, but what really sells is the idea of sharing."

For long-married couples too, the ritual of eating together holds meaning. "After 25 years of marriage, we don't need grand gestures," says Lakshmi Narayan, a retired banker. "We book a table, order our favourite thin-crust pizza and dessert, and spend uninterrupted time together. That is our celebration."

Psychologists point out that shared meals strengthen emotional bonds. Dining together encourages conversation, reduces digital distractions and builds connection. In fact, several surveys indicate that couples who prioritise shared experiences, such as meals, report higher satisfaction in their relationships.

This Valentine's Day, many eateries are introducing curated menus, live music and themed décor to elevate the experience. From rooftop settings under the stars to cosy corners with soft lighting, the focus remains the same: creating space for connection. And amid gourmet platters and signature beverages, the humble pizza continues to hold its place as a crowd favourite.

As Bengaluru gears up for another evening of love-filled tables and bustling kitchens, one thing is clear: romance may begin with words, but it often deepens over food. Whether it is a lavish spread or a simple pizza shared between two people, the joy of eating together remains one of the sweetest ways to celebrate love.

# Souparnika River rescue: ₹4.7 cr STP upgrade launched

## KUWSDB upgrades Kollur's 1.5 MLD treatment plant with membrane bioreactor after pollution violations flagged by KSPCB and National Green Tribunal scrutiny

Garima Prasher
garima.prasher
@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

State Pollution Control Board found commercial establishments were discharging raw sewage into stretches of the Agni Theertha and Souparnika rivers in Udupi

**Following repeated inspections that exposed untreated discharge from hotels and commercial units, authorities are modernising infrastructure and adding high-capacity pumps to prevent shock loads and sewage overflow into ecologically sensitive river stretches**

The Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board (KUWSDB) is in the process of implementing an advanced wastewater treatment technology to stop the entry of raw sewage into the Souparnika River, an important river system in the Western Ghats of Karnataka.

KUWSDB is upgrading the existing 1.5 MLD sewage treatment plant (STP) by incorporating a membrane bioreactor (MBR) system to enhance its treatment efficiency and capacity. An estimate of ₹4.70 crore for the project has received administrative approval from the State government.

The move comes after the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) found that several commercial establishments in the area were discharging raw sewage into stretches of the Agni Theertha and Souparnika rivers in Udupi district. The KSPCB conducted a site inspection in 2024 following an order from the Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The inspection was prompted by a petition filed by local residents before the tribunal, raising concerns over river pollution and its impact on public health and ecology.

During the inspection, the KSPCB observed that various commercial establishments, lodges and hotels were disposing of sewage and solid waste directly into the Souparnika River.

According to KUWSDB, the sewage entering the river system is largely starchy in nature and contains a high concentration of total suspended solids. This has resulted in shock loads on the STP, particularly during peak tourist seasons. The uncharacteristic nature of the sewage has affected the plant's treatment performance, prompting the proposal to upgrade the facility to ensure compliance with standards prescribed by the KSPCB.

The pollution control board had earlier carried out inspections in Kollur village. In 2021, it found that the STP was operating without valid consent and that no sewage effluent was entering the plant, indicating it was not being utilised. A notice was subsequently issued to KUWSDB.

Further inspections were conducted in 2023 based on complaints alleging pollution in the Agni Theertha River. After identifying irregularities, the KSPCB issued a notice to the Kollur Gram Panchayat and directed officials to complete underground drainage connections for all houses within its limits.

In addition to the proposed upgrade, KUWSDB has installed and commissioned two 25 HP submersible sewage pump sets in a wet well to prevent sewage overflow into the Souparnika River and improve overall wastewater management in the temple town.

## Winter lingers, but heatwave in Uttara Kannada

Even as winter conditions persist across much of Karnataka, with minimum temperatures staying below normal in several districts, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert for heat wave conditions in Uttara Kannada. The Meteorological Centre in Bengaluru has forecast hot and humid weather in the coastal district over the next three days, with isolated heat wave conditions likely on February 14 and 15.

The IMD said an upper air cyclonic circulation over the east Equatorial Indian Ocean and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal continues to persist, and under its influence, a low-pressure area is expected to form around February 15. A cyclonic circulation over south Tamil Nadu has weakened. Bengaluru is likely to see mainly clear skies, early morning mist, and temperatures around 31°C maximum and 17°C minimum. **–BMB**

## Ration card halt blocks welfare access

The Food and Civil Supplies Department's decision to suspend issuance of new APL ration cards and deactivate lakhs of inactive cards has triggered widespread distress among farmers, middle-class households and senior citizens. For nearly three years, no fresh APL cards have been issued, leaving many without a valid document required to access key services and welfare schemes.

Farmers seeking crop loans from agricultural credit and cooperative banks say their applications are being rejected as banks insist on either an APL or BPL ration card for processing. The absence of a valid card has also affected enrolment in health schemes such as Yashasvini and Ayushman Bharat, creating difficulties for persons with disabilities and those undergoing medical treatment.

With 80% skipping rations, Karnataka halted APL supplies, deleting cards and disrupting EWS reservations and Ayushman Bharat enrolments. **-BMB**

# Bengaluru mosques spearhead Ramzan anti-plastic drive

## Faith leaders, NGOs and volunteers unite across city masjids to embed sustainability into sermons, stalls and daily Ramzan practices

Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

As the holy month of Ramzan approaches, the Helping Heroes India Foundation (HHIF) and the Indian Ploggers Army have joined hands to spread awareness about the dangers of single-use plastics. Recognising the influence of community spaces, the organizations approached local mosques to integrate environmental responsibility into spiritual practice.

Younes Matheen, Founder and Volunteer Coordinator of HHIF, met mosque committee members, who welcomed the initiative. At Noorani Masjid in 9th Block, Jayanagar, Imam Zameer Ahamed embraced the cause and incorporated the message into his Friday sermon.

Addressing nearly 500 worshippers, Imam Ahamed spoke about the harmful effects of single-use plastics and disposable items, linking the issue to environmental degradation and moral responsibility. He urged the congregation to adopt sustainable alternatives such as cloth bags and steel containers for daily use, whether purchasing essentials from markets or carrying food from hotels.

The Imam emphasised that caring for the environment is not only a civic duty but also an act of faith. "It is everyone's responsibility to keep our country clean by supporting local authorities and avoiding single-use plastics," he said, reminding worshippers that stewardship of the Earth is rooted in spiritual values.

The collaboration marks a significant step in blending faith-driven advocacy with sustainability, aiming to inspire collective action during Ramadan and beyond.

Volunteers of Helping Heroes India Foundation (HHIF) and the Indian Ploggers Army want cloth bags to replace plastic covers

Muzammil Delvi, Trustee of Helping Heroes India Foundation, expressed support for bringing environmental awareness into mosques during Ramadan. He said such programmes should not be occasional but conducted regularly across masjids so that the message of sustainability becomes embedded in community life.

"There was a time when, as children, we carried our own cloth bags and steel containers whenever we went shopping. It was natural, simple and sustainable. We need to revive that culture and pass it on to the next generation," Delvi said.

In Bengaluru, other organisations are stepping up efforts to curb single-use plastics. Swabhimaan Trust in Koramangala has been engaging with local communities through awareness drives and campaigns encouraging sustainable practices.

During Ramzan, the Helping Heroes India Foundation team, along with the Indian Ploggers Army, plans to take the message beyond sermons and into action. At Noorani Masjid in Jayanagar, volunteers will distribute cloth and paper bags to worshippers, encouraging them to replace single-use plastics with eco-friendly alternatives.

Swabhimaan Trust, Helping Heroes India Foundation and the Indian Ploggers Army are also expanding their "plastic-free festivals" campaign to multiple masjid locations across Bengaluru to ensure a waste-free start to Ramadan.

"Today's gesture by the masjid authorities could set the right eco-friendly trend for others to replicate," said Plog Raja from the Indian Ploggers Army.

Highlighting efforts in Koramangala, Venket from Swabhimaan said that during Ramadan many masjids witness stalls selling samosas and fryums for iftar. "For the past few years, every day during Ramadan, we have aimed to distribute around 400 to 500 paper bags to these shops. The idea is simple — to provide an alternative so fried items can be packed in paper instead of plastic. This small step helps reduce plastic use in the community," he said.

### First major upset of T20 as Australia suffers shock defeat after power play crumble

# ZIMBABWE TURN THE TABLES

**1. Zimbabwe players celebrate after winning the match against Australia at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, on Friday; 2. Zimbabwe's Blessing Muzarabani celebrates the wicket of Australia's Matthew Renshaw**

**Zimbabwe**
**169/2**
**(20)**

**Australia**
**146**
**(19.3)**

Zimbabwe caused the first major upset at the T20 Cricket World Cup with a surprise 23-run win against Australia on Friday. Blessing Muzarabani grabbed 4-17 and Brad Evans picked up 3-23 as Australia was bowled out for just 146 in 19.3 overs, suffering a first loss in Group B that also features co-host Sri Lanka.

Matt Renshaw, playing in his first T20 World Cup, scored a fighting 65 off 44 balls and Glenn Maxwell hit 31 off 32 deliveries, but Muzarabani and Evans did enough damage up front by claiming four wickets inside the power play to steer Zimbabwe to a second successive victory in Group B.

Opening batter Brian Bennett had earlier anchored Zimbabwe's 169-2 with an unbeaten 64 off 56 balls. Tadiwanashe Marumani (35) and Ryan Burl (35) also made handy contributions while captain Sikandar Raza's late acceleration (25 off 13 deliveries) was crucial.

"I was bowling to some of the best players in the world, so I am really happy it came off really nice," said Muzarabani, who also completed 100 wickets in T20s. "Really good to beat Australia, but also (will be) nice to qualify, so looking forward to the next game now."

In the only other previous T20 World Cup game between the two nations, Zimbabwe defeated Australia by five wickets in 2007.

Australia was without captain Mitchell Marsh, sidelined for the second successive game due to a testicular injury he picked up on the eve of the first game against Ireland.

Makeshift opener Josh Inglis was caught off Muzarabani at deep backward square leg before big-hitters Cameron Green and Tim David went for ducks.

Evans found the under edge of Green's bat and had him caught behind while David — playing his first game since a hamstring injury ruled him out of the Big Bash League in late December — pulled Muzarabani's short ball straight to short fine leg.

Evans then got the prized wicket of stand-in captain Travis Head for 17, the ball rolling back onto his stumps after deflecting off his pads when he tried to drive a full-length delivery.

On a slow wicket where stroke-making was difficult, Maxwell and Renshaw rebuilt Australia's chase with a 77-run partnership, but Zimbabwe didn't allow the batters to break free and the asking rate soared.

With the pressure mounting, Maxwell played spinner Burl onto his leg stump in the 15th over and Marcus Stoinis holed out in the outfield of Wellington Masakadza before Muzarabani and Evans returned in the death overs to seal a dream win.

Earlier, Marumani replaced the injured Brendan Taylor as opener and made an aggressive start by hitting seven boundaries to help take Zimbabwe to 61-0 with Bennett. **–AP**

**Today's match**

- Ireland V/S Oman — 11.00 am
- England V/S Scotland — 03.00 pm
- New Zealand V/S South Africa — 07.00 pm

# Siddique, Aryansh dazzle in UAE's victory

**UAE's Junaid Siddique celebrates with teammates during the match between Canada and UAE, at Arun Jaitley Stadium, in New Delhi, on Friday**

Junaid Siddique's five-wicket haul was complemented by Aryansh Sharma's half-century as the United Arab Emirates defeated Canada by five wickets in their ICC Men's T20 World Cup match here on Friday.

Senior pacer Siddique headlined a disciplined bowling effort, returning with figures of 5/35 to help UAE restrict Canada to a below-par 150 for 7.

Aryansh then struck an unbeaten 74 off 53 balls laced with six fours and three sixes, while Sohaib Khan also played a very useful knock of 51 off just 29 balls to guide UAE over the line with two balls to spare.

Chasing the modest total, UAE struggled to build momentum and lost wickets at regular intervals even as Aryansh held firm at one end.

Left-arm spinner Saad Bin Zafar (3/14) dented the chase with three key strikes.

UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem was the first to depart, falling to pacer Kaleem Sana. Zafar then dismantled the middle order, first dismissing Alishan Sharafu, who mistimed a cover drive to Nicholas Kirton at extra cover, before removing Mayank Kumar and Harshit Kaushik with catches at long-on and midwicket respectively.

At the halfway mark, UAE needed 92 off 60 balls. But just when the chase appeared to be slipping away, Aryansh found support in Sohaib, who smashed four sixes and as many fours. The pair stitched together a crucial 83-run stand for the fifth wicket, bringing the equation down to 26 off 12 balls.

**Canada**
**150/7**
**(20)**

**UAE**
**151/5**
**(19.4)**

Aryansh showed nerves of steel, smashing back-to-back boundaries before adding a third off a free hit in the penultimate over.

Needing 8 off the last over, he hit a towering six to ease off the pressure. While Canada added to the drama by taking a wicket, it was a little too late with new man Muhammad Arfan finding the rope for a memorable win.

Earlier, opting to bat, Canada were jolted early as Siddique and Muhammad Jawadullah ripped through the top order inside the first four overs. Siddique set the tone with a superb opening spell, claiming two wickets upfront before adding three more at the death. **–PTI**

# Mukkamalla, Harmeet fashion big win for US

**USA's Harmeet Singh, left, appeals successfully for the wicket of Netherlands' Roelof van der Merwe, centre, during the match at MA Chidambaram Stadium, in Chennai, on Friday**

Saiteja Mukkamalla's attractive 79 and a four-wicket haul by former India U-19 star Harmeet Singh powered United States to a comfortable 93-run victory over the Netherlands in a group league fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Friday.

This is USA's first-ever T20I victory over the Netherlands. Mukkamalla's 51-ball knock formed the cornerstone of USA's competitive total of 196 for 6 while all-rounder Shubham Ranjane once again proved his prowess with an invaluable 24-ball 48 not out.

Left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh (4/21) didn't bowl too many wicket-taking deliveries yet Netherlands batters were left in a tangle as they were bowled out for 103 in 15.5 overs.

Harmeet's figures were the best by a USA bowler in a T20 World Cup match. In fact, two of Harmeet's wickets -- opener Max O'Dowd (13) and all-rounder Bas de Leede (23) -- were half-trackers that were deposited to the fielders. The other two deliveries were spot on -- one flat and skiddy that breached rival skipper Scott Edwards' defence, and the other a straighter one that trapped Roelof de Merwe in front. Another left-arm spinner Nosthush Kenjige got one that kept so low that opener Michael Levitt was forced to play all over it. The Netherlands were never really in the game for a chase on a track that got slower with the passage of time. Earlier, Mukkamalla provided the impetus with a 51-ball 79 before Ranjane's late surge ensured a competitive 196 for 6 after 20 overs.

**USA**
**196/6**
**(20)**

**Netherlands**
**103**
**(15.5)**

Mukkamalla added 55 for the second wicket with skipper Monank Patel (36) and another 54 for the fourth wicket with former Mumbai all-rounder Ranjane, who used the long handle to a good effect to take the team total close to 200. Mukkamalla, a former student of the cricket academy run by VVS Laxman in Hyderabad, hit five fours and four sixes. What stood out was his hitting on the off-side, including maximums over covers.

His driving was top notch, while Ranjane, towards the end, punished the short-ball tactic employed by the Netherlands bowlers. Former South Africa left-arm spinner Roelof van der Merwe was hit for a straight six by Mukkamalla. In the case of Ranjane, he pulled both Bas de Leede and Logan van Beek. Ranjane, who had scored a fifty against Pakistan, was in fine touch and when he and Mukkamalla were at the crease together, a 200-plus total looked possible. However van Beek and de Leede used clever change of pace on a slowish Chepauk track to pull things back. **–PTI**

# Affordable housing boosts Doddaballapur demand

Real estate development around Doddaballapur is witnessing a steady upswing as demand for residential and commercial spaces rises.

Located off the Bengaluru–Hindupur highway and well connected by rail and road, the town is emerging as a preferred choice for homebuyers and investors seeking affordability without sacrificing accessibility.

K Gowda, a realtor, said improved connectivity is a major growth driver. "The area is close to key employment hubs in North Bengaluru and stands to benefit from proposed infrastructure upgrades, including road widening and ring road linkages. This has renewed developer interest, resulting in more plotted layouts, mid-range apartments, and gated communities.

Buyers today want value for money along with seamless connectivity, and Doddaballapur offers that, especially for first-time homeowners and working professionals," he said.

Land prices, relatively stable until recently, are now rising, particularly near the railway station and major arterial roads.

Developers are also catering to students and industrial workers with budget housing options, supported by proximity to educational institutions and industrial zones. Improved infrastructure, expanding jobs, and competitive pricing are steadily transforming Doddaballapur into a growing real estate hotspot. **–Prakash VL**

# Infrastructure push powers Nelamangala property market

Nelamangala, located about 28 km from central Bengaluru, is fast emerging as one of the most promising real estate destinations in North Bengaluru. With competitively priced residential plots, strong road connectivity, and its inclusion among the city's proposed satellite towns, the region is witnessing rising investor interest.

Localities such as Arasinakunte and surrounding areas are seeing steady demand, with property investments expected to deliver significant long-term returns. Proximity to Tumakuru Toll, Magadi Road, Dabaspet industrial area, and major highways has strengthened Nelamangala's appeal as a preferred investment corridor.

Growth in the region is being fuelled by upcoming infrastructure projects, proposed airport plans, logistics parks, and expanding industrial activity. Nelamangala is surrounded by employment-generating small and medium industries and is close to reputed educational institutions and healthcare centres. **BMB**

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# Kanakapura Road becomes realty investment magnet

Kanakapura Road has emerged as one of Bengaluru's most sought-after real estate destinations, driven by strong infrastructure growth and its inclusion in the state government's Greater Bengaluru plan. With several development projects taking shape, premium residential sites and plotted developments in and around Kanakapura Road are seeing rising demand.

Devendrappa K, a realtor said, "The area has gained a cosmopolitan character, offering budget-friendly options for the middle class along with reputed educational institutions, religious centres and well-developed neighbourhoods such as JP Nagar, Kumaraswamy Layout, Anjanapura and parts of Banashankari. Its recognition as a well-planned residential corridor has made property investment here a matter of prestige for many buyers."

Connectivity continues to be the biggest draw.

"The four-lane Kanakapura Road, upcoming Metro extensions, NICE Road linkage and the proposed Satellite Town Ring Road are expected to further boost accessibility while easing traffic congestion in the long run.

Proximity to IT hubs, corporate offices, malls, entertainment zones and wellness centres has attracted buyers from across the country and even overseas. Areas such as Harohalli, Kaggalipura, Talaghattapura and Bannerghatta Road, which still retain a green and semi-rural charm, are especially appealing to those seeking eco-friendly living", Srinidhi N, a realtor said by adding that with infrastructure steadily improving and property values on the rise, Kanakapura Road is fast becoming a favourite among long-term real estate investors.

**–Prakash VL**

# Namma Metro eyes KR Puram–Hoskote link

Namma Metro is gearing up to extend the Purple Line with a proposed 16 km double decker corridor from KR Puram to Hoskote, aimed at strengthening metro connectivity in Bengaluru's eastern outskirts.

A New Delhi based firm has been roped in to conduct a feasibility study that will assess traffic conditions, station locations, project cost and overall sustainability.

The proposed corridor is part of the Purple Line extension, which currently runs for 43 km from Challaghatta to Whitefield. If cleared, the project will significantly ease travel for residents of Hoskote and nearby areas, who now depend on Whitefield or Benniganahalli metro stations to reach the city.

The study is exploring a double decker model that combines a metro line and flyover on a single structure, offering connectivity to key growth zones such as Budigere Cross, Katamnallur Gate, Hoskote Toll Plaza and areas influenced by the Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway and the Satellite Ring Road.

Around 11 stations have been proposed along the stretch, including KR Puram, TC Palya Gate, Bhattarahalli and Hoskote Government Hospital. Officials said a detailed project report will be prepared based on the feasibility findings, following state government directions to expand metro services beyond the city limits as part of a broader push to improve suburban and peripheral connectivity.

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# BENGALURU SPEAKS

and gets heard on this page

## STORY BEHIND THE PHOTO

### MIGRATORY MELODY CAPTURED

Our reader shares a striking close-up of a Rosy Starling perched amid a lively flock during a recent visit to Hubli. Captured as the birds filled the air with chatter, the image highlights the delicate plumage and alert expression of this migratory visitor, which journeys all the way from the deserts of Central Asia and Southeast Europe an evocative reminder of nature's far-reaching seasonal rhythms.

The picture was clicked by reader **Sridhar Comaravalli, Cartoonist**

If you have a picture and a story to share, send us the picture with your name and number at **mybangaloremirror@timesofindia.com**

# Bengaluru's ageing sewage network strains under explosive urban growth

## With ₹105 crore annual spending, thousands of complaints and ageing pipelines, BWSSB battles daily to prevent sewage overflows across City

Managing Bengaluru's sewage network has turned into a daily numbers game for the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board. On an average day, the Board spends nearly ₹28 lakh, attends to close to 70 complaints and deploys dozens of heavy machines just to keep sewage from spilling onto city roads.

With around 3.5 lakh manholes spread across the city and an underground drainage network stretching nearly 11,900 kilometres, Bengaluru operates one of the largest sewerage systems in the country. Keeping it functional costs the BWSSB about ₹105 crore every year, underscoring the growing strain on ageing civic infrastructure amid rapid urban expansion. Official data show that nearly 25,000 sewerage-related complaints were recorded over the last year, averaging about 2,000 every month. These range from overflowing manholes and sewage backing up onto roads to broken covers and hazardous open pits. In several instances, contamination of drinking water pipelines has also been reported, raising public health concerns.

A BWSSB official said the Board conducts large-scale cleaning drives to prevent blockages. Between 15,000 and 20,000 manholes are cleaned every month — roughly 600 a day. Despite these efforts, the system remains under constant pressure due to illegal sewer connections, diversion of rainwater into sewage lines and damage caused by heavy vehicular traffic.

The scale of the challenge is compounded by ageing infrastructure. Large portions of the sewer network are more than four decades old. At the same time, new layouts, apartment complexes and commercial developments continue to add to the load, often without proportionate upgrades to underground systems. Officials acknowledge that infrastructure expansion has not kept pace with the city's rapid growth.

**Nearly 25,000 complaints, 3.5 lakh manholes and decades-old pipelines define the scale of Bengaluru's sewer crisis, as rapid urban expansion outpaces infrastructure upgrades and forces costly, round-the-clock emergency interventions.**

To manage daily operations, the Board relies on a substantial mechanical fleet. This includes 230 jetting and suction machines, six high-capacity super jetting-cum-suction units, five roscpecter machines and four desilting machines. Across 43 BWSSB subdivisions and 15 wastewater management sub-divisions, four to five machines are deployed daily to clear blockages and respond to emergencies.

Sewerage maintenance accounts for over 10 percent of BWSSB's annual water management budget of ₹972 crore. Each sub-division receives nearly ₹2 crore annually for sewer-related works. The Board also plans to install ductile iron pressure manhole covers at about 1,500 high-risk locations, particularly on sloping roads, to prevent accidents and withstand vehicular load. From December, BWSSB has begun reducing manual cleaning by introducing AI-enabled robotic systems for manhole maintenance. **— BMB**

**BWSSB cleans nearly 600 manholes daily, yet ageing pipelines and illegal connections keep the city's vast sewer network under constant strain.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

Elephants rely heavily on their trunks for feeding, exploration and social interaction, and about 1,000 whiskers along the trunk play a critical sensory role. A new study published in science reveals that these whiskers are uniquely adapted to enhance tactile perception. Led by Andrew Schulz of the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems, researchers found that each whisker functions as a sensory organ, transmitting vibrations to mechanoreceptors at its base when bent by contact. Unlike the solid, circular whiskers of rodents, elephant whiskers are flattened in cross-section and contain hollow tubules near the base, similar to animal horns. This structure makes them lightweight yet resilient essential because they do not regrow if damaged. Using nanoindentation, scientists discovered a functional gradient in stiffness: the base is as rigid as hard plastic, while the tip is about 40 times softer. This variation enhances spatial sensitivity, helping elephants detect where contact occurs and adjust movements precisely. Researchers believe these findings could inform the design of tactile sensors for future robots, improving their ability to handle delicate objects and navigate complex environments. **— Reuters**

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# GST on milk and education? Here's a fact check by Finance Minister in Lok Sabha

**The Claim:** A Lok Sabha MP alleged GST is imposed on essential goods like milk, pencils, notebooks, education, healthcare, insurance, and even funeral services, burdening citizens throughout their entire life cycle.
**Fact:** The finance minister clarified milk, formal education, books, pencils, healthcare services, and funeral services remain GST-exempt since 2017, with September 2025 reforms further reducing dairy product rates and insurance GST.

A recent exchange in the Lok Sabha saw a Member of Parliament raise concerns over the imposition of GST on essential goods such as milk and educational supplies including pencils, sharpeners, erasers, exercise books, notebooks and maps. Responding strongly, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addressed the issue both in the House and on X, issuing what she described as a factual clarification. She said she had listened carefully to the MP's speech but found it "unfortunate that he twisted facts which are known to everyone in this House," adding that he had "very conveniently spoken about the life cycle of an individual & lied."

On the question of GST on milk, the finance minister clarified that since the rollout of GST in 2017, milk has been completely exempt. Referring to the MP's remarks, she asked whether he was "taking the members of this House as fools." She also cited the 56th GST Council meeting held on September 3, 2025, which revised rates on milk by-products. While milk itself has always attracted zero GST, products such as ghee, cheese and butter, earlier taxed at 12%, have now seen rates reduced to 5%.

Addressing education, Sitharaman stated that there has been no GST on formal education. "Preschool to higher secondary education, there's no GST. Education leading to recognised qualifications, there's no GST. On books, textbooks & notebooks, there's no GST since 2017," she said on X. She further rejected claims about taxation on basic school supplies, asserting that pencils, sharpeners, erasers, exercise books, notebooks and maps carry zero GST.

Chartered Accountant Ashish Niraj of A S N & Company told ET Wealth Online that the Finance Minister's clarification regarding formal education was accurate. He noted that while school education, recognised universities and approved vocational courses are exempt, GST applies to private coaching, unapproved vocational training and online certificate courses due to commercialisation. He added that printed books and essential educational materials are exempt, though GST applies to items such as pens, staplers, whiteboard markers and certain paper products. On healthcare, the Finance Minister stated that treatment, diagnosis and care services have attracted 0% GST since July 1, 2017. She also said health and life insurance on individual plans were reduced to 0% in the September 2025 GST reforms. Rejecting another claim, she clarified there has never been GST on funeral services. **— ET Online**

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# Taj Mahal, First Red, Grand Gala in big demand

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Chennai and Goa are major buyers, and in recent days even Jharkhand and Assam have sourced flowers from Bengaluru's auction centres. Online orders and home deliveries have further fuelled sales.

Industry bodies estimate that around 10 to 15 lakh roses are being traded daily from the Bengaluru region alone. Srinivas D, a trader said, "Through the International Flower Auction Bengaluru and other associations, nearly ₹100 crore worth of business has been recorded in just two weeks, largely driven by red roses. Popular varieties such as Taj Mahal, First Red, Grand Gala, Fashion and Bordeaux are in high demand, not only for Valentine gifting but also for wedding décor, where red themed arrangements are trending."

Karnataka produces between 10 and 15 lakh roses daily during the season, while neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra add another 10 lakh flowers a day. Around 15 per cent of total production is exported. Traders say they have not seen such strong demand and steady pricing in recent years and so they are terming this year as the best in a long time.

# Probe into forged govt transfer note in CM's name

A complaint has been filed at the Vidhana Soudha Police Station against an unidentified person for allegedly circulating a fabricated government transfer in the name of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah order appointing Dr K Mohan, Health and Family Welfare Officer of Mandya district, as Deputy Commissioner of Excise in Mysuru.

The fake document triggered concern within the department, with officials calling it a deliberate attempt to spread misinformation and create confusion. Authorities clarified that no such transfer order had been issued and that the letter being shared online was entirely fabricated. In a statement on social media, the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah condemned the act, describing it as a serious and condemnable offence. He said miscreants had allegedly used digital tools to create a forged government note and circulate it widely across social media platforms and messaging groups. Ministry officials subsequently lodged a formal complaint, and the police have been directed to identify those responsible and initiate strict legal action.

The Chief Minister in his X post warned citizens against blindly trusting and forwarding unverified information. **BMB**

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### CHANGE OF NAME

**I,** Naheeda Anjum Shah # 10 D P Block Marappa Garden Benson Town Blr-46 have changed my name to Naheeda Anjumfor all purposes.

**I,** Sophia Priyadarshini Sahoo, No 13152 prestige finsbury gummanahalli Bengaluru 562149, I changed my name to Sophia Priyadarshini

**I,** SACHIN DOOT S/o Bahadur Singh R/o No. 86 Green Avenyu, Charan Nadi, Murlipura Jaipur, 302039 have changed my name to SACHIN KUMAR for all purpose

**I,** HARIRATNA SRINIVASA MUTHAPPA, W/o SRINIVASA MUTHAPPA # 52, 1st Cross, 1st Main, Benniganahalli, Old Madras Road, Dooravaninagar, Bangalore- 560016 have changed my name to HARIRATHNA SRINIVASA MUTHAPPA vide affidavit dated 13/02/2026 Before Notary K.V.Mani Bangalore.

**SIMRAN** Jain.i R/o Flat No 103, No 12/5, Df Silverline Queens Terraces, Chinna swamy Mudaliar Road, Shivaji Nagar,Tasker Town,Bengaluru 560051.Have Changed My Name to Simran Jain,Shall Be Called by This Name for All Purpose

**GIRISH** R/o # 61, Padmashree Gardenia Flat No 401, Raja Gardenia Arch Layout, 2 Cross, 3 Main, Turahalli, Subramanya Pura, Bengaluru 560061. Have Changed My Name to Girish Bhat, Shall Be Called by This Name for All Purpose.

**I,** Ashok Sherigar S/O Manjunath Sherigar Flat No-302, Fortitudes Sarayu BDA Double Rd Dwarakanagar 1st Stage RR Nagar B'luru-560098 have changed my name to Ashok Manjunath Sherigar for all purposes.

**I,** Savita Karabasappa Udapudi W/O Karabasappa Udapudi R/o No-1404, Ward No-1, Kadarakoppa Road Lokapur, Mudhol, Bagalkot-587122 have changed my name to Savita Udapudi for all purposes.

**I,** Keerthan S/O: Nagesh Moily R/O: #24-20, Baithurli, Somappa Moily Compound, Kudupu Post, Vamanjoor, Mangalore- 575028, Karnataka. Have changed my name to Keerthan Moily.

**SAVITRI** Shadadalli R/o # 23, Opp Siddartha School, Karivobanahalli, Bengaluru-560073. Have Changed My Name to Savitri Anand Policepatil My Self Called by This Name for All Purpose.

**I,** Shakeel Pasha Ameer S/o Ameer Jan # 2 3rd Main Road K G Halli Blr-45 have changed my name to Shakeel Pasha for all purposes

**I,** NITYA PANEESH CHANDRA D/o. Jyanesh N resident at No.67, 6th main road, 2nd stage, Mahalaskhmipuram, Nagpura, Bengaluru- 560086 have changed my name to NITYA PHANEESH CHANDRA NAMA vide Affidavit date. 13.02.2026 sworn before notary Raghunath Rao, Bangalore

**I,** FARHAZ GHEEWALE, S/o ZULFIKARAHMED GHEEWALE, R/o H No 3612, Khanjar Galli, Belagavi, Karnataka 560001. I have changed my name to FARHAZ ZULFIKAR GHEEWALE FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSE

**I,** Renuka Kalahal W/O, Basavaraj R/o # 104 Hmr Purple Elite 4th Block 8 Th Cross Hennur Hbr Layout Kalyaan Nagrpost Bangaluru-560043 have changed my name to Renuka for all purposes.

**I,** Krishna Vishwakarma M S/O, Mahendra Vishwakarma R/o 1 St Floor Thanisandra Srk Post Catt Amma Road Bangalore 560077 have changed my name to Krishna Vishwakarma for all purposes.

**I,** PRASNNA KUMARA S S/o, SHIVABASAVAIAH S Resident at Sri Gangadhareshwara Nilaya, 1st division, ward No.7, Saraswathipuram, Turuvekere Town, Tumakuru 577227, have changed my name to PRASANNA KUMARA S vide Affidavit date. 13.02.2026 sworn before notary Raghunath Rao, Bangalore

**I,** RADHAMANI D R (Old Name) R/at No. 45, B Block, Mano Nilayam, 1st Cross, Cybele, Green Layout, Maragondanahalli, Bengaluru-560036 have changed my name to RADHIKA ABHIJIT JAIN (New Name) vide affidavit dated: 11/2/2026 Before Notary K.V.Mani Bangalore.

**I,** NAGAMANGALA ANANTHARAMU, S/o NAGAMANGALA NARASIMHAMURTHY, R/o No 1323, 11th main, Vijayanagar Bangalore 560040. I have changed my name to ANANTHARAMU NARASIMHAMURTHY for all future purposes.

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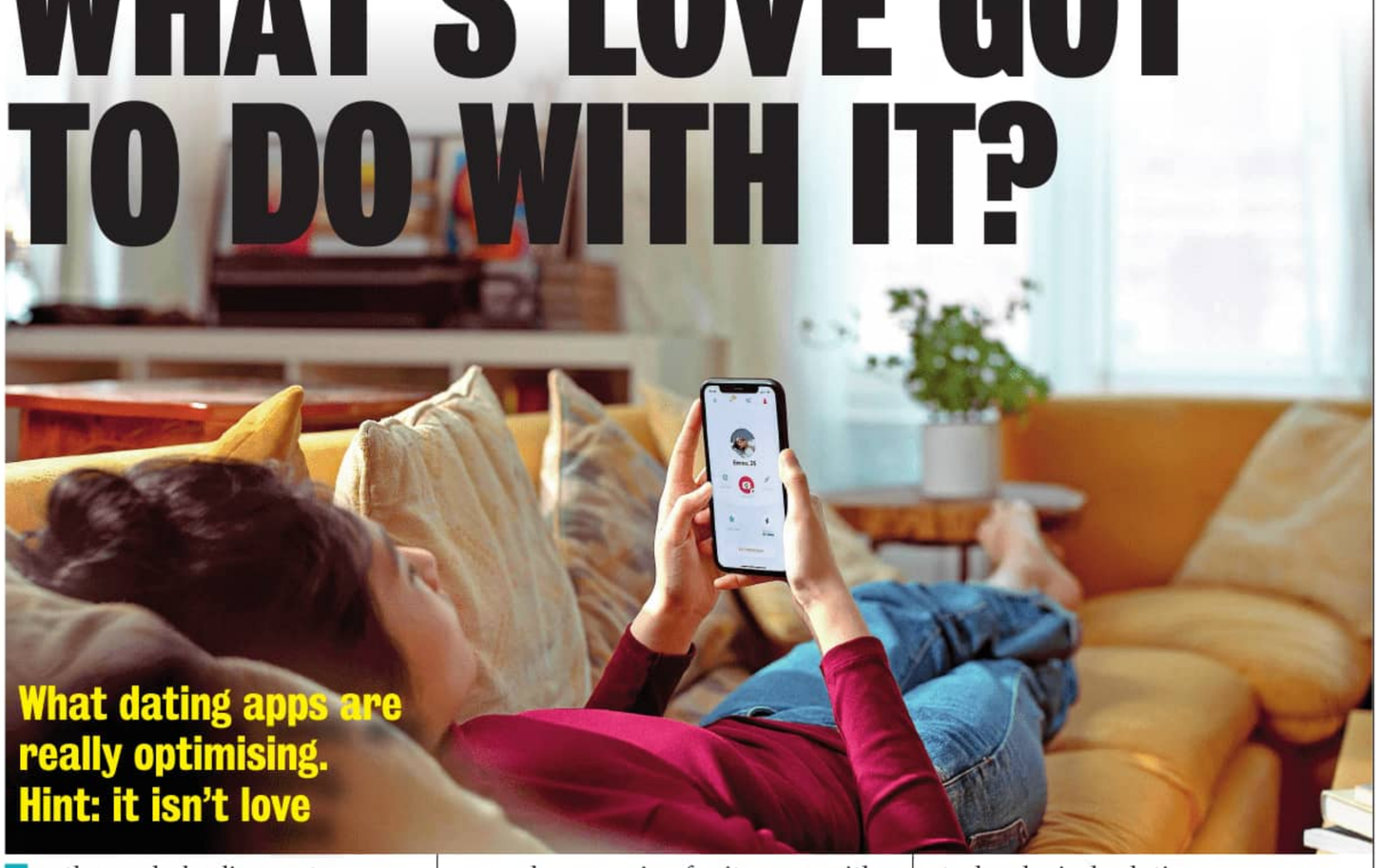
# WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?



**What dating apps are really optimising. Hint: it isn't love**

In the weeks leading up to Valentine's Day, dating apps typically see a spike in new users and activity. More profiles are created, more messages sent, more swipes logged.

Dating platforms market themselves as modern technological solutions to loneliness, right at your fingertips. And yet, for many people, the day meant to celebrate romantic connection feels lonelier than ever. This, rather than a personal failure or the reality of modern romance, is the outcome of how dating apps are designed and of the economic logic that governs them.

These digital tools aren't simply interfaces that facilitate connection. The ease and expansiveness of online dating have commodified social bonds, eroded meaningful interactions and created a type of dating throw-away culture, encouraging a sense of disposability and distorting decision-making.

## The business of modern dating

Online dating apps are big business.

Match Group, a technology company that dominates the online dating sector with an extensive portfolio of dating app products - including Tinder, Hinge, Match.com, OkCupid, Plenty of Fish and OurTime - reported fourth-quarter revenue of USD 878 million this month.

Its analysis showed fewer people are paying for its apps, with paying users down five per cent year over year.

The decline appears to reflect a trend prompting the company to develop new artificial intelligence tools to drive user growth and appeal to younger customers. Part of this means converting free users into paying ones.

Dating apps don't sell love. They sell the feeling that it is one premium upgrade away. The platforms aren't primarily designed for users to find love and promptly delete the apps from their phones. They're designed to keep users swiping.

## Why swiping never ends

Prolonged uncertainty is profitable. By creating the sense that a better match is always one swipe away users are kept engaged. Design strategies that gamify choice, offer intermittent variable rewards (like a slot machine) and frequent push notifications produce a fear-of-missing-out mentality and can lead to compulsive and addictive patterns of use.

Maximising user interaction and time spent on the app, and accumulating consumer data turn users into lucrative opportunities for paid features, monthly subscriptions and advertising dollars.

Dating apps market the idea that dating platforms can achieve our social goals more efficiently and more intelligently, meeting a real-world need with a technological solution.

In this system, people are expected to constantly improve and optimise themselves. Paying for added features becomes an investment in oneself, while value is determined by desirability, performance and outcomes.

By creating an interesting profile, crafting witty messages and curating photos and videos of ourselves, we commodify our time and self-worth, reinforcing the idea that we alone are responsible for our success on the apps, even if the playing field is strategically manipulated to keep us on them longer.

So are we being set up to fail? The distinction between failure and success overlooks a key issue: dating apps function as political entities that control access to and distribution of resources.

## Changing social reality

Online dating apps sell us hope by exploiting our needs, desires and insecurities. When apps keep hinting that something better is just one more swipe away, they start to reshape our expectations, and even inflate them.

Typically, people employ a decision-making strategy called "satisficer," which refers to both "satisfy" and "suffice." This means we generally choose something that's good enough, rather than searching endlessly for perfection, because of limits on time, information and cognitive energy. In relationship decisions, compatibility used to be enough.

With apps, there's an endless supply of options - endless potential partners, endless possibilities. The issue is that the options feel infinite and, as a result, we're being trained not to be satisfied anymore. Rather, we're encouraged to keep swiping.

The platforms serve as central planners of resource access, production and distribution, offering the information and databases that guide decisions in a global market of potential partners. As a result, human actions are treated as market-based transactions.

Users adopt a consumption mindset in which choosing partners is no different from shopping, constantly comparing others and discarding some in search of the highest-value partner.

Rather than being defined by connection or mutual care, interactions become a question of optimizing our choices. The illusion of oversupply creates the sense that people are replaceable and forces them to compete on superficial standards of beauty or status. Success and desirability on these platforms tend to reinforce existing hierarchies such as class, race and religion.

These tools can also promote a rejection mindset, with users more likely to reject potential partners as the number of options increases, becoming more closed off to romantic opportunities.

## Loneliness is a feature, not a flaw

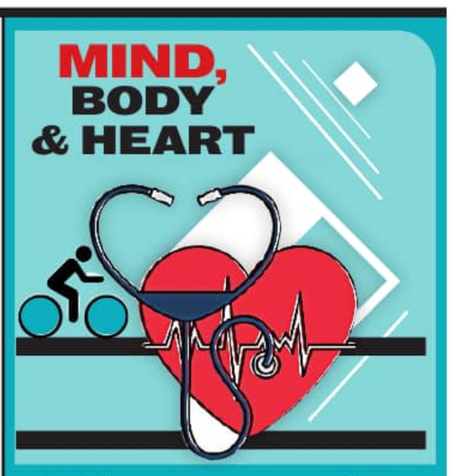
Reducing romantic connection to a commodity weakens social bonds and prioritises individual success over community, leading to increased isolation and loneliness.

Dating apps are active platforms that prioritise personal preferences and individual strategies rather than addressing structural inequalities or the underlying causes of loneliness.

By fostering a competitive digital environment, these apps encourage disposability and change how people assess and select one another, often resulting in burnout and cynicism.

Users are prompted to view themselves as products to be optimized and others as options to evaluate. Dependence on dating apps to address loneliness ultimately weakens our social bonds and alters how we engage with one another.

*(By Mathieu Lajante and Sameh Al Natour, Toronto Metropolitan University, The Conversation)*




## All you need to know about...

### Colorectal cancer

**Early symptoms**

The most common signs and symptoms for early-onset colorectal cancer are blood in the stool, abdominal pain and a change in bowel habits, or any combination of these conditions. Unexplained anemia, or low red blood cell levels, is another potential symptom. These are warning signs that people should not ignore.

Having these symptoms does not necessarily mean you have colorectal cancer, but they are worth discussing with a physician. In some cases, your doctor may request a colonoscopy for further evaluation.

**How to reduce risk**

- Communication and action are key. Talk to your health care team about your personal risk based on your age, family history and any signs and symptoms to ensure you're matched with the screening exam and test best for you.
- Take charge of your health. There are lifestyle factors you can control to reduce your personal risk of colorectal cancer. These include regular physical activity; a diet high in fruit, vegetables and fiber, and low in processed meats; and maintaining a healthy weight.
- Moderating or eliminating alcohol and tobacco use can also reduce your colorectal cancer risk.
- Share information with loved ones and your health care team. Knowing your personal and family history of polyps or colorectal cancer and communicating it with your doctor can help ensure you get the right test at the right time. Sharing your personal history could save the lives of your children, siblings and parents.

**(Christopher Lieu and Andrea Dwyer, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, The Conversation)**

**MIRRORLIGHTS**

## Heel push-ups while sitting may reduce post-meal blood sugar spikes by up to 52 pc: Review

Lifting and lowering heels, or soleus push-ups, while sitting may reduce post-meal blood sugar spikes by up to 52 per cent and insulin response by 60 per cent during oral glucose tolerance tests, according to a review of previously published studies.

Performing passive stretching exercises for 40 minutes acutely lowered blood glucose by up to 28 milligrams per decilitre, persistently improves blood flow to the femur or thigh by 30 per cent, findings published in the journal Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research and Reviews show.

Researchers, including those from New Delhi's Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals and Fortis-C-DOC Centre for Excellence for Diabetes, Metabolic Diseases and Endocrinology, said the study highlights practical, low-cost exercise options for preventing and managing diabetes among the sedentary, elderly or those with limited mobility.

A moderate lower-body strength is associated with up to 35 per cent lower risk of type 2 diabetes, the authors said.

"Lower-body (simple resistance activities, soleus push-ups, and stretching exercises) are simple interventions that can be performed while seated and have the potential to significantly improve glucose regulation, insulin sensitivity, and vascular function in populations unable to engage in traditional weight-bearing aerobic exercise," they wrote. **—PTI**

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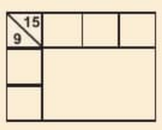
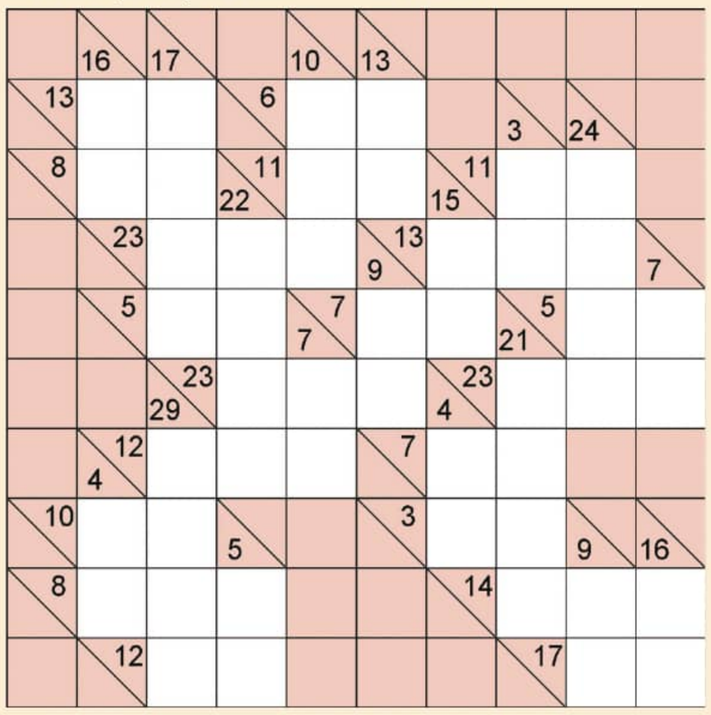
## Kakuro

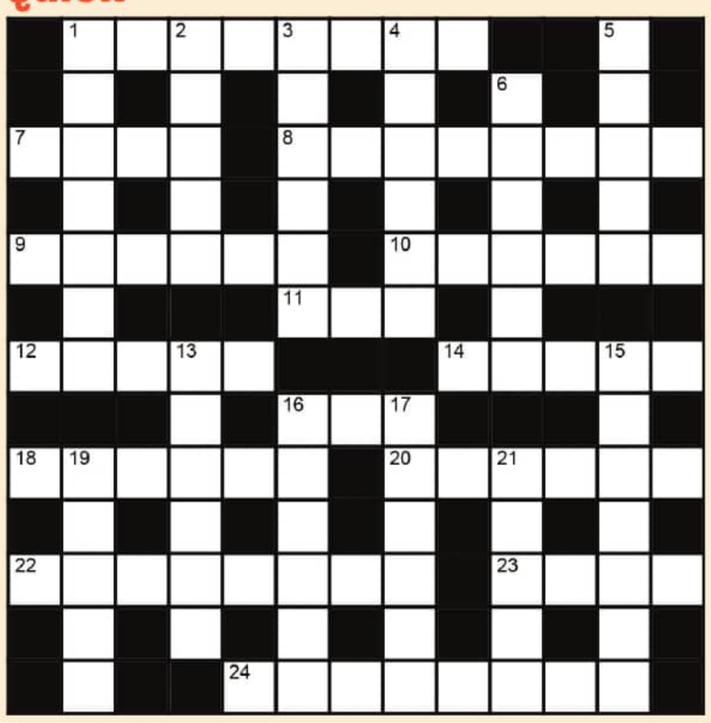
The numbers in the grey squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the grey square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 3 boxes horizontally next to 15 must contain 3 digits that add up to 15, whereas for 9, it is the 2 boxes placed vertically under it that must add up to 9. No zeros are used here, only the digits 1 through 9.



Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance, in the example, we cannot have the combination of 4+7+4 for 15.



## Quick



**ACROSS**

1 Ex-P.M. of India (1,1,6)
7 Eve's hubby (4)
8 Tipu Sultan's father (5,3)
9 Kilt material (6)
10 Breadth, scope or boundary (6)
11 ___ off : fall asleep (3)
12 Sturdy (5)
14 Persian monarch, ___ the Great (5)
16 Note of the musical scale (3)
18 Piece used in a game (6)
20 Has a good time? (6)
22 Dedication (8)
23 ___ minor : Little Bear in the sky? (4)
24 Meetings for boat races (8)

**DOWN**

1 Fictional archaeologist ___ Jones (7)
2 Whole range (5)
3 Composer ___ Sebastian Bach (6)
4 Befuddled (6)
5 Gourdlike fruit (5)
6 Nice-looking (6)
13 Smaller moon of Mars (6)
15 Novel by James Joyce (7)
16 Neither feral nor wild? (6)
17 A rupture (6)
19 Body of water (5)
21 Compete with lances (5)

## Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

**Today's CLUE: T EQUALS C**

PJ ONB THX'U CHVM PU ENNG, HU IMHFU CHVM PU INNV ENNG.

## Linemaro

Are you single and ready to mingle?

## Mindchow

Never allow someone to be your priority while allowing yourself to be their option

## Joke of the day

A small town is a place where there is no place to go where you shouldn't

## Loop

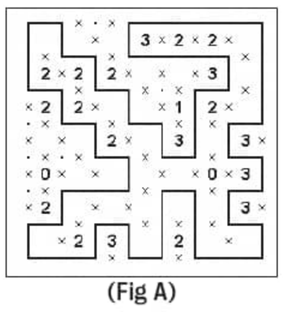
### Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

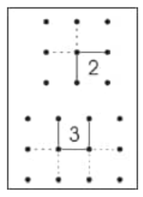
### How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

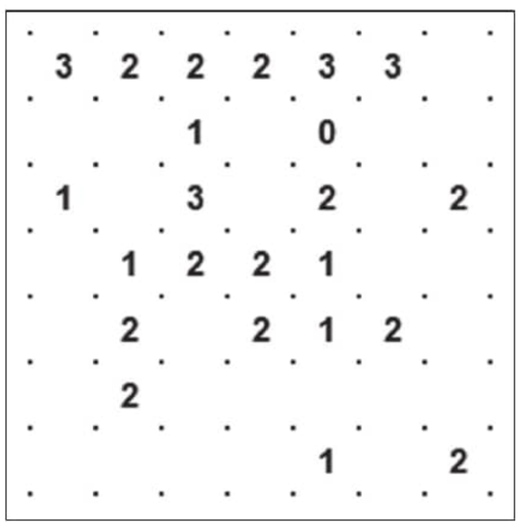
Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



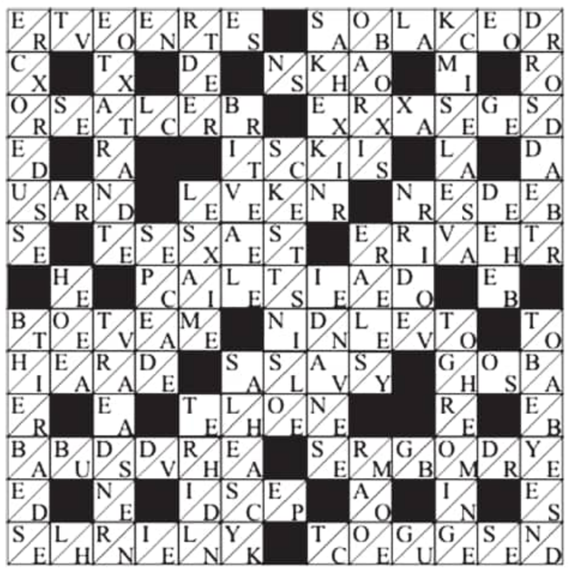
(Fig A)



(Fig B) Not Allowed



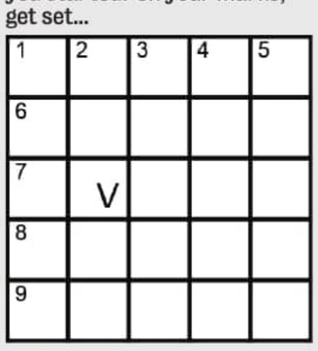
## Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

## Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...



**ACROSS**

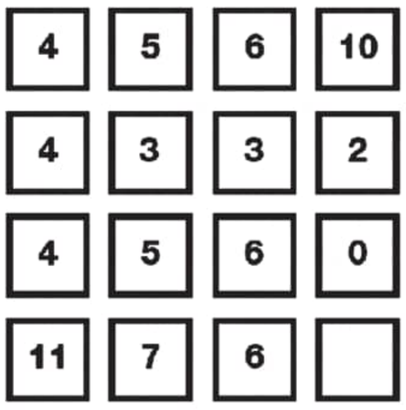
1 Hards; 6 Me roc; 7 Via so; 8 Large; 9 PL row

**DOWN**

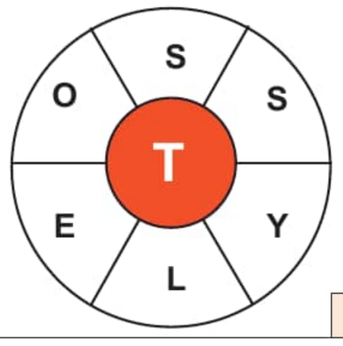
1 Scrap; 2 V hero; 3 Mi Goa; 4 Wears; 5 L Lord

## Mensapuzzle

Which number replaces the blank and completes the sequence?



## Bull's eye



How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

**05** Average; **06** Good; **08** Outstanding

## SudokuChallenge

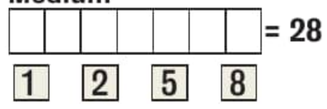
| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | | | | 9 | | 1 | | |
| | 9 | 1 | | 2 | 4 | | | |
| 5 | | 4 | | | 1 | | | |
| 4 | | 6 | 9 | | | 5 | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | 4 |
| | | 7 | | | 3 | 9 | | 8 |
| | | | 6 | | | 2 | | 5 |
| | | | 5 | 4 | | 3 | 8 | |
| | | 5 | | 1 | | | | 7 |

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

## Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.

**Easy**



= 9

4 6 7 8

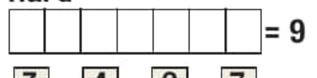
**Medium**



= 28

1 2 5 8

**Hard**

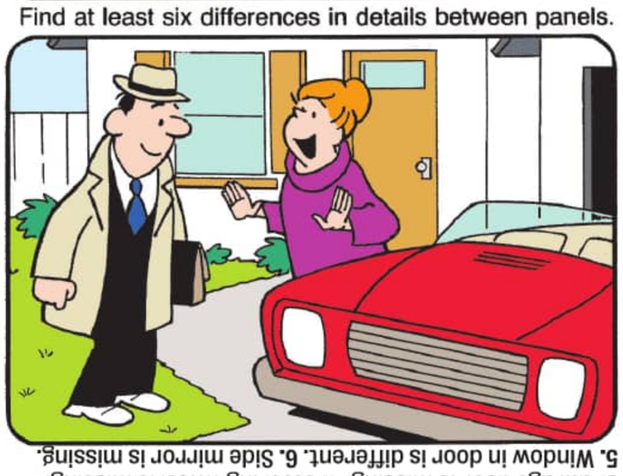


= 9

3 4 6 7

## Hocusfocus

Find at least six differences in details between panels.



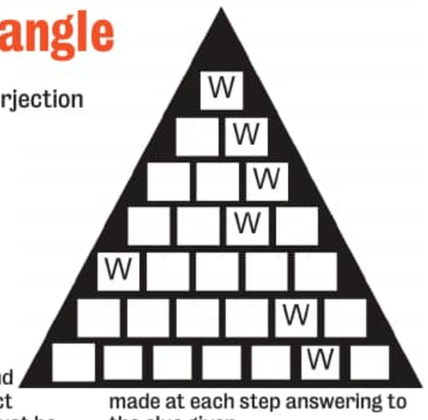
**Differences:** 1. Arm is longer. 2. Grille is different. 3. Garage door is missing. 4. Steering wheel is missing. 5. Window in door is different. 6. Side mirror is missing.

## Riddler

You are enjoying your breakfast after having put some salt on your scrambled eggs when your nerdy brother presents you with an ice cube floating in a glass of water and a short length of string. He challenges you to remove the ice cube from the glass using the string without tying any knots. What strategy do you use to remove the ice cube from the water glass?

## Alpha triangle

1 Compass point
2 Sympathetic interjection
3 Adage
4 Rules
5 Room dividers
6 Permits
7 Rolls around

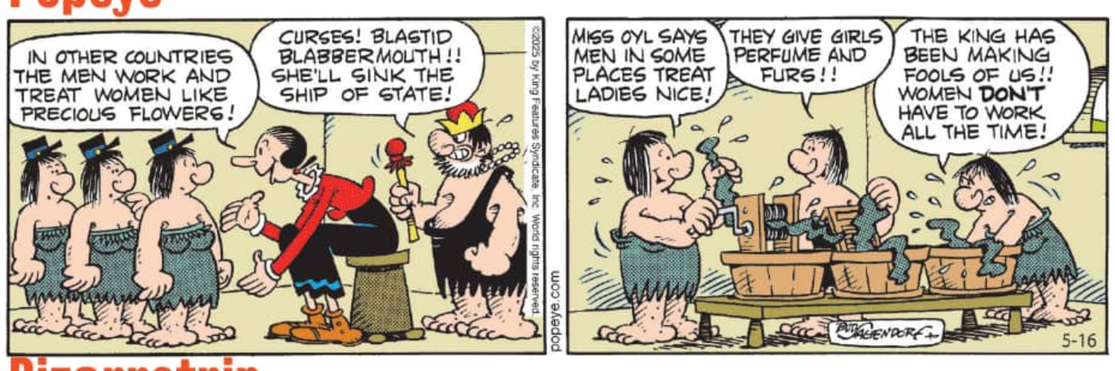


Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.


DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE »

# COMICS

## Popeye


IN OTHER COUNTRIES THE MEN WORK AND TREAT WOMEN LIKE PRECIOUS FLOWERS!
CURSES! BLASTID BLABBERMOUTH!! SHE'LL SINK THE SHIP OF STATE!
MISS OYL SAYS MEN IN SOME PLACES TREAT LADIES NICE!
THEY GIVE GIRLS PERFUME AND FURS!!
THE KING HAS BEEN MAKING FOOLS OF US!! WOMEN DON'T HAVE TO WORK ALL THE TIME!
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popeye.com
5-16

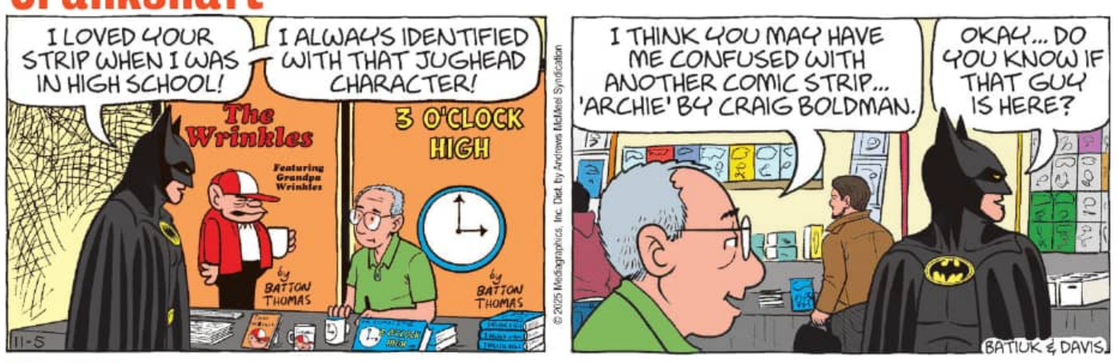
## Bizarrotrip

## Diamond Lil

## Hart of the city

CHARLOTTE, THIS IS AN INTERVENTION.
YOU GOTTA STOP SENDING CHAIN LETTERS.
JOIN THE CHAIN LETTER CLUB!
WE PROMISE YOU IF YOU IGNORE THE LETTERS, NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN TO YOU.
JUST TRY GOING THE DAY WITHOUT SENDING A LETTER.
I DON'T REALLY WANNA TAKE THE RISK...
BUT I CAN'T SAY NO TO A BEHAVIORAL EXPERIMENT. LET'S DO IT.
HEART OF THE CITY © 2025 ANDREWS MCMEEL
@GOCOMICS.COM/HEARTOFTHECITY

## Crankshaft


I LOVED YOUR STRIP WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL!
I ALWAYS IDENTIFIED WITH THAT JUGHEAD CHARACTER!
The Wrinkles
Featuring Grandpa Wrinkles
by BATTON THOMAS
3 O'CLOCK HIGH
by BATTON THOMAS
I THINK YOU MAY HAVE ME CONFUSED WITH ANOTHER COMIC STRIP... 'ARCHIE' BY CRAIG BOLDMAN.
OKAY... DO YOU KNOW IF THAT GUY IS HERE?
© 2025 Mediagraphics, Inc. Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication
BATIUK & DAVIS

## Mutts

# WRITTEN IN THE STARS

DR SUNDEEP KOCHAR

## If it's your birthday today

Love is your primary theme, but career success follows closely behind. Professional opportunities multiply through social connections and charisma. Romantic relationships reach a new level of maturity and joy. Home becomes a hub for artistic expression and warmth. Travel with loved ones creates unforgettable memories. A balanced budget allows for both savings and occasional, well-deserved personal indulgences.

### Aries Mar 21 – Apr 20

Your fiery passion shines this Valentine's Day, Aries. Channel your energy into an adventurous date night. Your vibrant enthusiasm will create unforgettable memories and light up the evening for your soul.

### Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23

Let your charismatic personality shine during a glamorous date night. Your bold confidence and generous warmth will make your partner feel like royalty, creating a celebration that is truly spectacular.

### Sagittarius Nov 23 – Dec 22

Embark on a spontaneous adventure or try something brand new with your partner today. Your free-spirited, optimistic nature infuses joy and excitement into your celebration, making it a wonderful experience.

### Taurus Apr 21 – May 20

Indulge in the finer things today by creating a cosy, candlelit atmosphere. Your sensual and romantic nature will make your partner feel cherished, making this a truly beautiful and adore.

### Virgo Aug 24 – Sep 23

Show your deep love through thoughtful, practical gestures today. Paying attention to small details and planning heartfelt surprises will be greatly appreciated, proving how much you truly care for them.

### Capricorn Dec 23 – Jan 20

Expect a day full of wonderful surprises today. By expressing your love through commitment and dedication, you will deepen your emotional connection and build a very beautiful, lasting bond together.

### Gemini May 21 – Jun 21

Communication is your best gift today. Engage your partner in stimulating conversations about your dreams. A playful, lighthearted approach keeps the mood dynamic and ensures your partner remains completely captivated.

### Libra Sep 24 – Oct 22

Embrace balance and harmony by planning an aesthetically pleasing date today. Your natural charm and grace create an enchanting experience, making this Valentine's Day a memorable and very romantic celebration.

### Aquarius Jan 21 – Feb 19

Celebrate your unique connection by planning a date that reflects your innovative personality. Engaging in deep, intellectual conversations will strengthen your emotional bond and create a truly special, memorable day.

### Cancer Jun 22 – July 23

Embrace your nurturing side today by creating a warm, comforting environment. Cooking a homemade meal and expressing your feelings openly will deepen your connections and make your loved ones feel joy.

### Scorpio Oct 23 – Nov 22

Let your intense passion and mystery shine today. Creating an atmosphere of intrigue allows your emotions to run deep, strengthening the intimate bond you share with your partner very significantly.

### Pisces Feb 20 – Mar 20

Reach out to your true self and express your deepest feelings today. Creating a magical atmosphere filled with music and art will lead to a deeply emotional and romantic experience.

www.sundeepkochar.com

# KIDZONE

Swetha, Bengaluru

Nayomi
Bengaluru

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Please send hard copies of your artwork in A4 size only.

# SOLUTIONS

**RIDDLER** Take the string and soak it in the water. Let the string rest across the ice cube. Reach across the table and get the salt that you used on your eggs; pour the salt over the string and the ice cube. The salt causes the ice to melt. However, when you stop pouring the salt, the water that formed on the top of the cube will refreeze with the string embedded in it. Now you can lift the ice cube with the string.

**BULL'S EYE**
fest, lost, slot, slyest, stole, style, SYSTOLE, toss

**FAST FIVE**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | H | A | R | D |
| C | O | M | E | R |
| A | V | I | S | O |
| R | E | G | A | L |
| P | R | O | W | L |

**STRIKE OUT**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | V | E | N | T | S | | S | O | A | K | E | D | | |
| X | | X | | E | | S | K | A | | I | | O | | |
| O | S | T | L | E | R | | E | R | A | S | E | D | | |
| D | | A | | I | | I | S | | L | | D | | | |
| U | R | N | | E | V | E | N | | R | E | D | E | | |
| S | | T | E | X | A | S | | R | I | V | E | R | | |
| H | | P | A | L | S | | I | E | D | | B | | | |
| T | O | T | E | M | | I | N | L | E | T | | O | | |
| H | E | R | E | | S | L | A | Y | | H | O | B | | |
| E | | A | | T | H | E | N | | | R | | E | | |
| B | U | D | D | H | A | | E | M | B | O | D | Y | | |
| E | | E | | I | C | E | | O | | N | | E | | |
| S | H | R | I | N | K | | C | O | G | G | E | D | | |

**QUICK**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | N | | |
| | | | | R | E | G | A | T | T | A | S | | | |
| A | | | | S | | | | | | S | | | | |
| D | E | V | O | T | I | O | N | | U | R | S | A | | |
| C | | M | | C | | R | | | O | | S | | | |
| D | O | M | I | N | O | | E | N | J | O | Y | S | | |
| | | E | | | D | O | H | | | | L | | | |
| H | A | R | D | Y | | | | C | Y | R | U | S | | |
| | | N | | | N | O | D | | T | | | | | |
| T | A | R | T | A | N | | E | X | T | E | N | T | | |
| I | | U | | A | | L | | E | | O | | | | |
| A | D | A | M | | H | Y | D | E | R | A | L | I | | |
| N | | A | | O | | D | | P | | E | | | | |
| I | K | G | U | J | R | A | L | | | M | | | | |

**MENSA PUZZLE**
2. Working in columns, multiply the top and bottom values to get a 2 figure result, written in the 2 central squares.

**QUOTE UNCODE** If you can't make it good, make it good, at least make it look good.

**SOLVE IN 1M**
[((2^9/16^3))^-3) / 2] = (2^9)/2 = 2^8 = 256

**SUDOKU**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 7 |
| 1 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 8 | 6 |
| 8 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| 2 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 8 |
| 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| 4 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 9 |
| 7 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| 3 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 2 |

**ALPHA TRIANGLE**
W, Aw, Saw, Laws, Walls, Allows, Wallows.

**GO FIGURE**
Easy
7 + 4 - 8 + 6 = 9
Medium
8 + 5 + 1 x 2 = 28
Hard
4 - 7 + 6 x 3 = 9

**LOOP**

**KAKURO**

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**# Hollywood calls**
Farhan Akhtar to play Pandit Ravi Shankar in Sam Mendes' four-film Beatles biopic

# Good show, brother

Proud brother Ishaan Khatter penned an appreciation post for Shahid Kapoor on social media after witnessing his latest outing 'O'Romeo'.

Ishaan shared that Shahid perfectly embodies his golden principle as an actor - "to burn inside, with an outer ease". Lauding Shahid's portrayal as Ustaraa in Vishal Bhardwaj's directorial, he wrote on the photo-sharing app, "So immensely proud of you bhai. The golden words for me as an actor - "to burn inside, with an outer ease".

You embody that principle with such elan. You deserve the skies and the best roles as an actor. To take a character like Ustaraa and

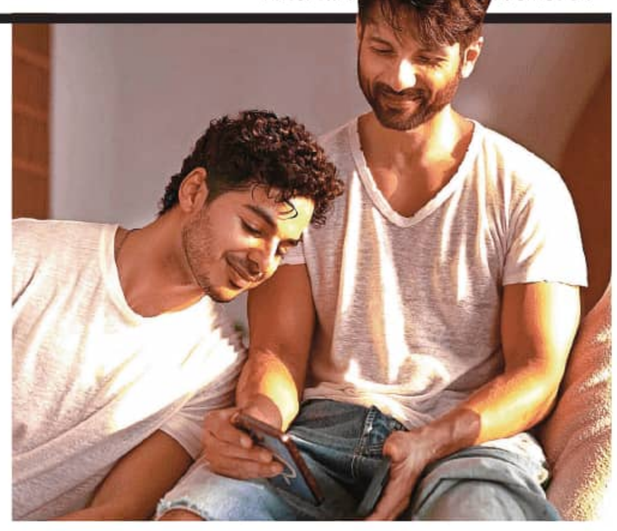
imagine him like a graphic novel hero and yet make him believable takes a GIANT actor and star (sic)."

"The VB-SK magic is undisputed. Go watch O' Romeo in cinemas now for a rock concert experience in the theatres. It's a total dhamaka," Ishaan went on to add.

Prior to this, Shahid's better half, Mira Rajput, also cheered for 'O' Romeo', calling her husband a "destiny's child".

Commending Shahid for his relentless spirit and immense talent, Mira shared on her IG, "... The one who is relentless, talented beyond belief, eyes that express a thousand words, and a heart that always mends. Because what holds you is the light. Destiny's child. It's time to shine. Spectacular is an understatement. I am so proud of you."

—ETimes



# Violent and stale saga

## Daiva

**2.0** RATING ★★☆☆☆

- **DIRECTOR** MJ Jayaraj
- **ACTORS** MJ Jayaraj, Surabi Reddy, Neethu Rai, Bala Rajwadi, Nischita Shetty, Cheluvaraj Gowda
- **Duration** 132 minutes
- **Certification** U/A

The movie Daiva (meaning God) begins with a murder of two teachers, who had come to a remote village where Kalegowda (Bala Rajwadi) rules the roost. The hapless villagers can do nothing about the murders except mourning the teachers' death. At this juncture, the scene is shifted to Kalegowda, who advises a Minister over the phone not to construct a school building in the village. Kaalegowda does not want villagers to become literate. He usurps farm lands of villagers who borrow money from him. Deva (MJ Jayaraj) supports Kaalegowda.

Meanwhile, Rudra (Arun Bacchan), a lewd and vicious person, molests Deva's lover. You have to watch the movie to know what Deva's objective is and what happens to him.

Director-cum-hero Jayaraj deserves a pat on the back for handling two responsibilities – playing the protagonist and handling the megaphone – for this movie. But it seems to have taken a toll on him as he looks tired and monotonous throughout the movie. He has to improve a lot to be able to show emotions. Some of the scenes, especially where rowdies force farmers to sign on land documents and another scene where a woman visits a priest seeking his blessings, are far from convincing. All the heroines – Surabi Reddy, Neethu Rai, and Nischita Shetty – have to hone their acting skills. Bala Rajwadi has provided good support.

Lack of comedy and romance makes this movie a dull affair. Incongruous scenes set at a tea stall and a tailoring shop add no value to the film. Too much violence and an overdose of action scenes also play spoilsport. The climax defies logic and makes one wonder if the film belongs in the mythological genre.

If you have nothing else planned, you can catch this film.

—Y Maheswara Reddy

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